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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: WESTERN HEMISPHERE: VENEZUELA, CHAVEZ'S NEW
CONSTITUTION; SCO PAULO

"New Constitution Gives Chavez Too Many Powers"

Business-oriented Valor Economico editorialized (8/21): "The constitutional reform proposed by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez can be summed up by an old phrase: 'The state is me.' The new laws will make that nation an extension of Chavez's personal will. The powers are absolutely exorbitant, even for the usual pattern of Latin American dictatorships. Hugo Chavez's main goal is to guarantee his perpetual reelection, and everything indicates that he will get that, and even more.... The economy will suffer transformations.... The concept of property will become a mess, where private property will have to coexist with 'social,' 'public,' 'collective' and 'mixed' properties.... There is no clearer and more absurd example of the extraordinary powers Chavez intends to grab than the Executive proposal to give the president control over the management of the nation's international reserves.... The practice is common in African dictatorships, with the known disastrous results.... The management of reserves in the hands of a politician who seems determined not to respect limits can not only cause economic disaster, but also serves as a remarkable weapon of political corruption and personal enrichment. There is no distinction in this regard between socialist and other dictatorships.... The new Venezuelan constitution will eliminate still existing democratic mechanisms in that nation. Supported by a sea of petrodollars, Chavez will reign absolute as long as destiny decides."

White